

Designing with Natives: Rethinking the Role of Australian Native Plants in the Open Spaces of Elizabeth and Golden Grove

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Abstract

The use of Australian native plants, in both public and private designed landscapes, has had a varied history in South Australia. Initially widely viewed in a negative light, shifts in cultural and environmental view-points have seen native plants come to be both accepted and appreciated in the second half of the twentieth century. The effects of this shift in thinking can be observed in South Australia in the wider use of native plants in public spaces including in planned environments designed and built since World War Two. This paper examines the rise in interest in native plants and rethinks the rationale for their use locally in public open spaces in post-war residential environments. It focuses on two master planned communities developed on farm land, respectively, north and north-east of Adelaide: Elizabeth, designed and built by the South Australian Housing Trust during the 1950s and 1960s, and Golden Grove constructed between 1984 and 2003 as a joint venture of the Government of South Australia and the Delfin Property Group. Both developments were conceived with significant percentages of open space, well in excess of the legislated provision, and both saw extensive use of native plants. The paper surveys the nature of open spaces provided in both case study areas and considers and evaluates the role of these designated open spaces planted with native plants from design, social and cultural perspectives.

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Introduction

The use of native plants in the public landscapes of South Australia has been directed largely by changing cultural attitudes. Native plants were regarded initially by the early colonists with suspicion and fear and were little used in their attempts to recreate a familiar environment that was reminiscent of ‘home’. With the passage of time

native plants came to be viewed with a new appreciation, as a valuable resource, before nascent environmental leanings led to their role being reappraised, resulting in their increased use within the urban environment. This article presents preliminary findings of research into two interrelated areas of South Australia's planning history. It pertains to the use of native plants in the public landscapes of two suburban developments in the second half of the twentieth century - Elizabeth and Golden Grove. Firstly, it considers the social planning aspects of urban open space and the potential of open space to create a sense of community, as well as the role of planting schemes in contributing to ideas of community building. Secondly, it reviews the role of design professionals and the general public in shaping cultural attitudes towards the use of native plants in the open spaces of Elizabeth and Golden Grove. The paper is divided into three main sections: the first outlines historical attitudes towards native plants in South Australia from settlement until the late 1970s; the second describes the planning models adopted by the planners of Elizabeth and Golden Grove to guide the physical and social parameters of the two developments; and, the third looks specifically at the role of native plants within the developments of Elizabeth and Golden Grove.

Tracing Attitudes

The reactions of the early colonists who settled South Australia to the native vegetation and landscape, were largely unfavourable. Used to the ideas of the picturesque where nature was tamed and domesticated and therefore civilised and godly, the foreignness of the South Australian landscape evoked feelings of fear and unease.¹ In his book *The Making of the South Australian Landscape* Williams catalogues the settler's general views - the Mount Lofty ranges were described as 'dreary, sombre and gloomy', the Mallee scrub was 'horrid, valueless and barren', the open grasslands an 'abomination of desolation' and, the interior was 'repulsive and monotonous'.² The Surveyor General, Colonel William Light, described the area as appearing to be 'land in the possession of persons of property rather than left to the course of nature alone' and as having 'a degree of landscape arrangement, not to be exceeded by art.'³ Williams attributes part of the reason for Adelaide being located on the plains as being due to the more cultivated appearance as noted by Light. While some did see beauty, most viewed the landscape as in need of rescue as JF Bennett

described so aptly during his three year sojourn in South Australia in the early 1840s: 'I can scarcely imagine a more interesting scene than to observe a country in the course of being rescued from a state of nature.'⁴

As the nineteenth century progressed the landscape and some of its native vegetation became valued as a resource which the early exploitation of Adelaide's premier open space - the parklands - illustrates amply. Trees were removed for use as building and fencing materials and as firewood, and the native grasses were used as pasture for stock. There were strong cultural preferences for replanting the parklands with exotic trees. However, an 1859 letter to the local newspaper the *Register* notes some mostly unsuccessful attempts at transplanting eucalypts (*Eucalyptus* spp) back into the parklands and along some city streets.⁵ Such efforts perhaps indicate an early recognition of the suitability of indigenous native vegetation in a landscape unmediated by reticulated water and subject to a climate that is comparable to that of Northern Africa. Some natives, particularly various *Eucalyptus* species, were trialled and found to have an economic value as a forestry resource. Others such as the mallee gums (*Eucalyptus* spp) continued to be seen as a nuisance and were ripped out of the ground and burnt.⁶

Reticulation of water occurred in the City of Adelaide in the 1850s and became more common in the suburbs by the mid 1870s. Easy access to water led to a rapid increase in the different types of exotic plants that could now be grown and private gardens began to proliferate.⁷ Native plants, particularly ferns, were included in small numbers in private gardens if they met cultural expectations of garden worthiness. As the century progressed awareness grew of the value of native plants in the public landscape and private garden. Books such as those by William Guilfoyle, Curator of the Melbourne Botanic Garden, and Ernst Heyne, a South Australian nurseryman, described how native plants could be used to meet the same design requirements as exotics.⁸

The proliferation of Australian and particularly South Australian gardening literature in the first half of the twentieth century, in the form of books, magazines and newspapers encouraged an increasingly accepting audience to cultivate native plants in the home garden. Public opinion was further influenced by art. Two local South

Australian artists, Rosa Fiveash and Hans Heysen, were both renowned for their artworks, Fiveash for her exquisite botanical illustrations of native plants and Heysen for his paintings depicting South Australian bush landscapes. Burgeoning Australian patriotism due to World War One saw Australian plants like the wattle (*Acacia* ssp) adopted for their symbolic associations. Some families, such as the Ashbys of ‘Wittunga’ in the Adelaide foothills recognised the beauty of Australian plants and designed a large proportion of their gardens to accommodate their native plant collections. A number of prominent garden designers both locally and interstate increasingly included natives in their plant palettes.⁹

In the first half of the twentieth century there were two significant South Australians advancing the use of native plants in the public landscape. The first, August Pelzer the Adelaide City Council Gardener between 1899-1934 trialled native plants, seeking and ultimately planting in the parklands and city streets those species which proved suitable for cultivation under the stressful conditions of an urban environment.¹⁰ The second and less publicly well-known was Albert Morris. During the 1920s and 1930s Morris was responsible for remediating the mining landscapes of Broken Hill through a program of experimental revegetation largely with arid zone native plants. Morris was considered a pioneer of xeriscaping in Australia and was regarded, by his botanical peers both in South Australia and interstate, as the expert on the native vegetation of the surrounding area. While his project was initially met with public ‘hostility and apathy’ the local community increasingly accepted his replanting strategies as they improved the physical environment.¹¹

During the 1950s and 1960s rising concerns about the loss of the natural environment in terms of its scientific, aesthetic and flora and fauna values resulted in active campaigns by concerned individuals and groups for the preservation of sites of particular interest. In some cases those campaigns led to the establishment of national parks and conservation reserves.¹² The Society for Growing Australian Native Plants was formed in 1957 and advocated for and explained how to cultivate native plants. In 1966 Betty Maloney and Jean Walker published *Designing Australian Bush Gardens*. Similar books followed and this led to a rise in private gardens based solely on native vegetation.¹³

Locally, natives were a strong feature of the private garden commissions and public design projects of landscape architect Allan Correy and landscape designer Robin Hill who worked in South Australia mostly during the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to his design work Correy was also an ardent conservationist. Hill was involved with the tree plantations of the Onkaparinga estuary and the landscape design for Monarto.¹⁴ Monarto was to have been a ‘social[ly] and environmental[ly] visionary’ new city located 80km east of Adelaide near the country town of Murray Bridge. Viewed as innovative, ambitious and highly controversial it was seen as a solution to high population forecasts but was cancelled in 1975 after those forecasts were revised downwards. The overarching design philosophy for Monarto had been ‘to plan and develop ... in harmony with the physical features and climate of the region’. Viewed by its planners as a city in the Mallee, Monarto’s open space planting scheme relied predominantly on pre-settlement vegetation. The landscape was to be converted from farmland back to Mallee scrubland and large tracts were replanted before the project was cancelled.¹⁵ Within the space of 140 years attitudes towards native plants had come full circle.

Models of Design

Since settlement the social and physical design of South Australia’s urban areas and country towns has followed a pattern of adopting and applying international planning models as a guide to development.¹⁶ Following in that tradition, four influential planning concepts developed in the first half of the twentieth century, were used to guide the built and social form of Elizabeth and Golden Grove.¹⁷ They are:

- The garden city, garden suburb idea
- The neighbourhood unit concept
- The Radburn idea
- The post-war British Mark 1 New Towns.

The garden city was devised by Ebenezer Howard in the 1890s in response to the degraded urban conditions of English industrial cities and sought to combine ‘the advantages of town and country life in a new urban community’.¹⁸ Howard based his idea on satellite cities that were separated by green belts. Open space played an

important role in Howard's concept in part because of his view that contact with nature affected spiritual renewal. In addition to the green belt, twenty-five per cent of the city was allocated as open space in the form of parks, playgrounds and public gardens.¹⁹

Architects Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker drew on Howard's garden city ideas in their designs for Letchworth (1903) and Hampstead Garden Suburb (1907), London, England. A hierarchy of open spaces, each with its own set purpose, was provided for both passive and active forms of recreation. In addition Unwin and Parker saw open space sites as a way to create community by providing sites for 'cooperation' and 'interaction' between the residents. Importantly the interaction facilitated by the open space was to be between the working and middle classes. The planting of the overall site was also an integral element of Unwin's design model and one that he and Parker implemented at Letchworth and Hampstead. Aware of the cultural associations between people and plants, Unwin sought to borrow that connection to strengthen the residents' attachment to the site by planting a different species of tree in each street. He believed and promoted the idea that the creation of noteworthy seasonal variation, through the site's planting scheme, would 'reinforce the [residents'] sense of place'.²⁰

North American socio-planner, Clarence Perry, was highly influenced by Howard and Unwin and Parker's ideas in his development of the neighbourhood unit concept in the 1920s. In addition, Perry also drew upon current North American sociological thinking and his own research on the importance of the primary school in the development of his concept. The neighbourhood unit has six main design principles including: 'size', 'boundaries', 'open space', 'institutional sites', 'local shops' and, an 'internal street system'.²¹ The underlying premise of the neighbourhood unit was to create a sense of community by fostering personal interaction through the design of the space.²² The open space component of the model played an important part in that agenda and Perry specified that ten per cent of the development should be reserved for parks and recreation spaces to provide the residents with places for play and community interaction.²³

Architect Clarence Stein and landscape architect Henry Wright modified the physical layout of the neighbourhood unit in their development at Radburn (1928), New

Jersey.²⁴ Radburn was designed as the answer to the question ‘how to live with the auto’ or ‘how to live in spite of it’²⁵ but also sought to establish a model that would create ‘better communities...for the average family’.²⁶ The superblock was the main unit of design and incorporated: road hierarchies, the separation of pedestrian and vehicle movements where possible, the reorientation of the front of the house away from the street and the use of open space as a site ‘backbone’. The open space backbone was formed from linked communal park and recreation spaces that created a pedestrian network facilitating the residents’ access to community and local amenities such as shops and schools.²⁷ In addition Stein and Wright viewed the interior open space as a method to provide ‘enhance(d) community sociability’ that would lead to the creation of a ‘rich community life.’²⁸

The mark I British new towns were a response to the devastation caused by war-time bombing that dealt with the dual issues of post-war reconstruction and a desire to decentralise industry and the population away from large urban centres. The main design framework of the new towns was based on garden city and neighbourhood unit principles. In addition, the British Labour Government, unhappy with pre-war suburban developments that tended towards class separation, decided to embed social integration into the new towns policy.²⁹

A key premise underpinning the four planning models is their ability to achieve particular social outcomes through the use of physical design parameters, in particular the ability of a physical design to assist in the creation of community. Open space is a vital element of each and was used by planners to achieve a variety of physical and social objectives; it is, therefore, complicit in the social objective of community building. Such ideas of physical determinism have been vociferously critiqued, particularly the paternalistic notions of social mix that are based on an idealised perception of pre-industrialised village life. In turn, further research into the ability of physical design parameters to determine particular social outcomes has ascertained that design, in a neighbourhood unit context, can only offer the potential for particular social interactions to take place. The quality of design and ongoing maintenance of open spaces is also critical in forming attitudes towards the space itself and contributes to the types of behaviours that occur within those spaces.³⁰

The planners for Elizabeth and Golden Grove based their designs upon the physical and social elements inherent in the planning models described above. However, both developments also relied on additional social agenda to help with community formation. Open space was a vital element of the planning models and supported the planners of Elizabeth and Golden Grove towards achieving their social aims. Australian native plants were a purposeful inclusion within the open space planting schemes and as such assist the planners' social objectives. The remainder of this article focuses specifically upon the role of open space and natives plants within the two sites.

Elizabeth

In 1954 the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) employed John Dwight to head its newly created Parks and Gardens Department. It did so with the knowledge that a suitable employee would be needed to manage the re-greening of its proposed satellite city to be located on farmland recently purchased on the plains 25km to the north of the City of Adelaide.³¹ Elizabeth, as the satellite city would eventually be named, was developed by the SAHT during the 1950s-1960s. The SAHT chose the neighbourhood unit in the mould of the British new towns as the most appropriate planning model upon which to base its design for the approximately 2000 hectare site. In addition to the social and physical design ideas that were inherent in the neighbourhood unit and British new town models the SAHT also implemented supplementary measures to achieve its stated social agenda. The open spaces became important aspects of the physical and social design as sites in which the SAHT could create not only a pleasant environment to ameliorate the flat, hot, dry, dusty and windy conditions of its chosen site but also to assist the residents in building a community.³²



Figure 1: Australian natives were a feature of the green belt and wind break planting schemes at Elizabeth. (Source: Author, October 2010)

As in Howard's model open space comprised up to twenty-five per cent in some parts of Elizabeth and was provided at rates well in excess of the legislated five per cent of the time. The main physical objectives of the open spaces were to create wind breaks and to divide the site into a series of neighbourhood units; the SAHT used what it termed greenbelts to achieve that purpose. See figure 1. Socially the division of the site into smaller and discrete areas assisted the residents to identify with the site and develop a sense of place.³³ The SAHT viewed organised sport as a key method of community creation and used the provision of fully developed sporting facilities as one means of achieving its additional social agenda. Located in many of Elizabeth's greenbelts, either as the residents moved in or soon after different sporting areas were also loosely defined by native plants.³⁴ See figure 2. The provision of sporting facilities by the developer was atypical for the time. The SAHT also provided a number of small open spaces scattered throughout each neighbourhood unit. Conveniently located these small spaces were intended as sites for daily interaction between the residents, particularly by children and women. Playgrounds were provided by the SAHT at many of the neighbourhood shops for the same purpose.³⁵ See figure 3.

Dwight paid great attention to revegetating the landscape planting thousands of trees, approximately eighty per cent of which comprised natives. To ensure supply he

established a nursery which went onto produce about thirty two thousand plants, both natives and exotics, annually. Site conditions at Elizabeth - limited rainfall, temperature and alkaline soils – required careful consideration of the planning scheme and Dwight’s extensive use of native plants was an astute choice in light of those conditions. It also demonstrated that he was at the forefront of the change in thinking about natives at the time.³⁶ Jones notes Dwight’s design philosophy was about ‘site relevance and appropriateness and that garden design needed to work with nature.’ Originally from England, Dwight gained an early appreciation of nature while living on a farm in Middlesex as a child. His cultural attitudes towards Australian native plants possibly stem from that childhood understanding as well as being influenced through contact with other South Australian Quaker families such as the Ashbys and Morrisises both of whom were local advocates for Australian native plants.³⁷



Figure 2: Ridley Reserve, Elizabeth was typical of the SAHT’s inclusion of sporting fields within the green belts. Native trees defined the different playing areas. (Source: Author, October 2010)

The SAHT also viewed the private garden as a method of community creation and a means through which to soften the rawness of the newly developed town. Residents of both the rental and freehold houses were entitled to six free plants from the SAHT nursery and Dwight wrote a gardening book to assist residents in the development of their gardens. Casual friendly garden-oriented competition between neighbours was encouraged while an Elizabeth-wide garden competition assisted in hastening revegetation and at the same time fostered community spirit and pride. Natives were

not as significant a component of the private garden as they were in the public landscape but they still had a place.³⁸ Public and private actions in the revegetation of Elizabeth led to the area being described in 1982 by Galbreath and Pearson as a ‘city half hidden by trees and sweet with birdsong.’³⁹



Figure 3: Burgate Reserve Village Green, Elizabeth Grove was located adjacent to the neighbourhood unit shops. Native plants were used in both the original and newer planting schemes. (Source: Author, October 2010)

The ideas that underpin the SAHT’s social planning agenda have been extensively critiqued. Mark Peel, social historian and childhood resident of Elizabeth, was highly critical of the paternalistic notions of the SAHT’s architect-planners. He felt that the ideas surrounding the social design of the site made life more difficult, particularly for the female residents, by imposing middle class ideals of family upon the largely working class residents. Lack of employment opportunities for women within Elizabeth was particularly problematic. Yet in making Elizabeth ‘their place’ Peel also noted that the residents co-opted and used spaces in ways unanticipated by the planners.⁴⁰

Stretton similarly notes Elizabeth’s social failure in providing for the needs of women and youth. From a physical design perspective Stretton critiques the original site choice, monotony of street patterns and house design, the transection of the site by Main North Road and an overall design that meets the needs of the motorist rather than the pedestrian as was originally intended. Of the open spaces Stretton states that

‘too much of [it]...does very little except grow trees and increase pedestrian distances – though the more experienced the people become, the more of that sort of space people ask for.’ Yet when viewed in the context of urban design and new suburban developments during the post-war period both Peel and Stretton acknowledge that the physical environment of Elizabeth was far better than other suburban developments within Adelaide.⁴¹

Golden Grove

Golden Grove occupies a 1230 hectare site located 20 km to the north east of the city of Adelaide. It was developed as a joint venture partnership between the South Australian Government and the Delfin Property group between 1984 and 2003. The landscape comprises ‘rolling hills, a central plateau and deeply incised gullies’ and is dissected by both the Cobbler and Dry creek systems. Prior to development much of the site had been cleared for farming and quarrying.⁴²

Golden Grove is a complex development that not only tried to remedy the failings of 1960s-1980s urban fringe developments where the lack of services and facilities left residents isolated but also sought to adopt a new environmental approach to planning that redressed the need for and place of nature in the urban environment.⁴³ The former saw a raft of additional social agenda built into the planning documents for Golden Grove including the need for Community Development Plans and the establishment of a fund to pay for community building infrastructure. A key point of difference between Golden Grove and previous developments of the 1960s-1970s was the provision of services and facilities as the residents moved in.⁴⁴ Site planning at Golden Grove was based on the work of Ian McHarg, city planning practitioner and professor of city planning at the University of Pennsylvania. McHarg used map overlays to identify collective environmental constraints that would impose upon land development.⁴⁵ This evolved into an approach that saw hitherto ignored ecological systems attributed a value and ‘open space systems become adaptable for multiple uses.’ Golden Grove is recognised as the first master planned community in Australia to underpin its design philosophy with this new way of thinking.⁴⁶

In 1974 Tract consultants followed the map overlay process and identified the creek systems as being of both environmental value, albeit degraded at the time, and the

land surrounding those systems as being uneconomical to develop due to soil profile and geology. As a result the Cobbler and Dry creeks became the basis of the open space system. The open space provision at Golden Grove is about twenty per cent of the site, which is well in excess of the legislative provision of twelve and a half per cent.⁴⁷

Like Elizabeth the design of Golden Grove is based on neighbourhood units and has the same ideas of community building embedded within it. However, the idea of social integration between the working and middle classes was replaced with the idea of creating a “balanced” whole of life community. The open space system would play a critical role in not only assisting to create opportunities for social interaction and thereby community building but also to facilitate both Delfin and the State Government’s additional social objectives. Delfin would use the open spaces to market Golden Grove as offering a very particular type of lifestyle, now known widely and advertised as the Delfin lifestyle. The State Government saw the open spaces as sites for community facilities and also expected Delfin’s design to promote a lifestyle that was ‘healthy, good, moral’ and the exact opposite of what was perceived to have evolved in the suburbs of the 1970s-1980s. The physical environment at Golden Grove was explicitly planned and designed in an attempt to achieve the perceived needs of and create a sense of well-being for its intended community.⁴⁸

While the neighbourhood unit is the basic unit of design at Golden Grove the units were rebadged as ‘villages’ in support of Delfin’s marketing strategy of selling Golden Grove as an idyll country lifestyle that drew on the ideals of community and the Great Australian dream. The open space was used directly to support this strategy. Of the 250 hectares of open space 190 hectares are composed of ‘natural reserves’ and 60 hectares of more traditionally understood open space types. The ‘natural reserves’ are primarily those associated with the creek systems and the deeply incised gullies. The more traditional neighbourhood open spaces are the sports and playing fields, pocket parks, village squares and thickly planted road reserves.⁴⁹

The creek systems and incised gullies create a linear open space system which, as at Elizabeth, separates and defines the villages but also provides linkages between them.

In combination with the footpaths and road reserve plantings, this system forms the hike and bike network that is meant to facilitate easy access around the site or be a place to ‘meander, cycle, jog, hike, explore or ride a horse’.⁵⁰ See figure 4. The convenience, social and health benefits of the system are repeatedly made in the developer’s promotional material.⁵¹ Each village is designed around either a pocket park or village square. These spaces provide a more traditionally understood benefit as a focal point in which residents can interact with each other. Sports and playing fields have been strategically located throughout the development and where possible to meet the needs of multiple users, for example, as shared facilities between a number of co-located schools or school and community groups.⁵²



Figure 4: The hike and bike trail at Pedare Village, Wynn Vale ran between the cul-de-sacs creating an internal open space system for the residents. Native plants dominated the early planting schemes of the Golden Grove development. (Source: Author, November 2010)

The ecological perspective brought to the early development documents supports a strong environmental approach for the planting of the overall site. Plantings were to be primarily native with any exotics selected to require summer irrigation in extreme conditions only. Existing natives were to be retained where possible. Caryl Bosman, planning academic, argues that a predominantly exotic plant palette was purposely chosen by Delfin to assist in promoting their idealised version of a country life. Further, she views the developer’s plant selection as a part of the neo-liberal marketing strategy that ultimately guided the development of Golden Grove by

appropriating historical concepts of community. She also believes that Delfin's subsequent disregard of the stated environmental agenda was a by-product of trying to achieve a marketable and profitable development.⁵³ However, both natives and exotics were planted by Golden Grove's developers indicating that both approaches were followed. There were two main factors that determined which approach was applied. The first was the difference between the designation of the open spaces as 'natural' and those considered to be of a more 'traditional' type. The second was a time factor with the stage at which the various aspects of the development were carried out influencing the choice between predominately native or exotic plants.⁵⁴

Early promotional material not only indicates Delfin's awareness but also its actions in initially following a planting policy that relied predominantly on natives. Faced with a huge area of barren farmland to re-green the developer aimed in the first year to plant sixty thousand trees and shrubs followed by a planting regime of thirty thousand trees and shrubs each year thereafter for the anticipated fifteen year lifespan of the project. The joint venture established its own nursery to assist in achieving the developers' planting goal. Early images of the nursery indicate a native plant focus. The ancient river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) were used as a feature to market the linear open spaces created in the creek systems. The native vegetation planted within these 'natural' open spaces reflects a strong native plant philosophy.⁵⁵

There are some pockets of exotic plants within the 'natural' open spaces. Some are weeds while others form a part of the remnant cottage gardens and orchard plants purposefully retained by Delfin as a part of its agreement to preserve the heritage aspects of the site. Almost extinct indigenous native plants in the area have been identified in a similar manner to heritage sites. Delfin promoted family use of these natural reserves through a variety of community building exercises such as the annual cross country event held there. School-aged children were also a target of a Delfin supported Landcare project.⁵⁶

The planting of the 'traditional' open spaces is more complex. Those areas developed early in the project were predominantly planted with natives. As the pattern of development was to start in the south and progressively move north, natives predominate in the south while exotics dominate the northern half of the development.

See figure 5. Exotics are also the dominant planting along the Golden Way, the main arterial road through the site, and were selected primarily for their golden toned foliage or flowers. The use of associational planting was also used by the developers within each village. The planting schemes were selected to reflect the village's theme and were perceived as enhancing the residents' association with their place.⁵⁷ See figure 6.



Figure 5: Petworth Lake Reserve, Petworth Village, Greenwith was located in the most northern part of Golden Grove and was one of the last areas developed. The planting scheme was composed of both natives and exotics. A limited number of native trees were planted around the northern shore of the lake while exotics dominated the planting scheme associated with the playground and picnic area on the southern side of the lake. (Source: Author, November 2011)

One reason for the shift in planting philosophy can be explained by Delfin's use of the public landscape as a marketing tool throughout the life of the development. In the 1990s there was a backlash against native gardens, by this time the often unsuitable native plant choices of the 1970s and an incomplete understanding about how to maintain them properly had seen many bush gardens devolve into unsightly messes of straggly, overgrown plants. There was also a shift in the stylistic trends of domestic architecture that led to houses featuring a design pastiche of historical elements that supported a return in popularity of the cottage garden. With each village distinctly themed to create a sense of 'character and identity' that would enable a 'series of friendlier neighbourhoods' the planting of the public spaces needed to reflect the

changing cultural bias of the customer market which was moving away from a native plant palette towards one dominated by exotics.⁵⁸

The Joint Venturers viewed ‘the overall greening of the environment...(as) fundamental to the achievement of broader community development objectives’ and, as at Elizabeth, used the private garden as a means of achieving that agenda.⁵⁹ Each resident was entitled to twelve free plants from the Joint Venture nursery, vouchers to subsidise the cost of various landscaping materials from Garden Grove, a local landscaping supply business and nursery, and free design advice for their front yards. A home garden competition was run as a further means of promoting the greening of the site and as a community building exercise through an award for the best village.⁶⁰



Figure 6: Both the planting scheme and street names reflected the orchard theme of Orchard Village. Lemon scented gums (*Corymbia citriodora*) were planted in the village square and the surrounding street names were all associated with different types and varieties of citrus fruits and nut trees. (Source: Author, November 2010)

Conclusion

Largely cultural attitudes have directed the use of native plants in the urban landscapes of South Australia. Early feelings of unease coupled with a desire to create a place that more closely resembled home were replaced with an appreciation for native plants and a recognition that they represented home. A greater understanding of environmental issues in the post-war period led, in some cases, to the protection of the

natural landscape and saw native plants come to be more widely used in both private and public settings. The landscaping of projects like Monarto clearly illustrate the design professions' understanding of and willingness to accept environmental concerns and to implement planting schemes that not only reflected that understanding but also drew on and continued to shape cultural attitudes towards native plants.

In the second half of the twentieth century open space played a vital role in the development of South Australia's urban environment. It was used by design professionals for both the physical and social planning of urban areas, particularly through the use of the garden city/suburb, neighbourhood unit and Radburn models. Ideas of community building were associated strongly with the provision of open space. In turn, the planting schemes chosen for those sites supported community building by identifying and delineating both the open spaces and the overall site. The plantings also assisted in defining the kinds of activities suited to the open space.

Although developed thirty years apart and in response to different urban, political, economic and social conditions, Elizabeth and Golden Grove share many similarities. Both sites were designed following neighbourhood unit principles with supplementary social agenda in an attempt to address the perceived social ills that had occurred within the suburban developments that immediately predated them. Open space was viewed in both Elizabeth and Golden Grove as a means to facilitate the development of community, and Australian native plants were planted extensively to achieve that goal by ameliorating and re-greening barren farmland landscapes and by defining sites. In addition, the planting schemes in both developments can also be viewed in terms of their contribution to ideas of community building through their connection to the concept of sense of place.⁶¹

At both Elizabeth and Golden Grove it was the developers who were responsible initially for deciding upon the types of plants that were to be used to re-vegetate the landscape. At Elizabeth, Dwight was influenced by the nascent environmental movement and attitudes of a circle of acquaintances experienced in the use of native plants within the designed landscape. His dominant reliance on and site appropriate

choice of native plants was both at the forefront of and promoted further the use of natives within the public landscapes of other newly created suburban areas. The qualities of the open spaces were used pictorially to market Elizabeth overseas to prospective immigrants. Whether intentional or not the use of native vegetation assisted in promoting Elizabeth's Australian identity and the possibilities of a better family life. Other than minor incidents of vandalism which Dwight attributed to 'outsiders' and the odd 'borrowing' of trees by the younger local residents there is little to suggest any direct opposition by the residents to his choice of native plants for the public landscape. In fact, Peel notes one resident's relief as the plantings matured and began to better remediate the physical conditions of the site.⁶²

At Golden Grove the intent behind Delfin's use of native plants was more complicated. Like Elizabeth, the initial choice of native plants can be linked to the environmental and nascent ecological understandings of the design professionals responsible for planning the development. As at Elizabeth, the quality of the landscape at Golden Grove was highly important to the residents and the community came together to challenge the local Council and developers over any perceived diminution of that quality as the care and maintenance of the open spaces passed from developer to council. The quantity and quality of Golden Grove's open spaces identified the nascent *genius loci* of the site in the minds of the both Golden Grove's residents and those living in the wider council area.⁶³

The developer's capitalisation on Golden Grove's open spaces and in some cases the vegetation itself, particularly the river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) in the natural open spaces, as a marketing strategy saw the planting scheme become linked directly to residents' changing cultural attitudes. This occurred in domestic architecture preferences too as Tony Sabino noted when the market demanded traditional 'cottage homes'.⁶⁴ The shift towards traditional values was also reflected in Golden Grove's private gardens and suggests why Delfin modified its choice of plants in the latter stages of the development. The creeks and gullies were viewed as natural by the residents and developers alike and so retained native plants for their replanting schemes, while the planting schemes of the traditional open spaces were modified by Delfin to mirror the residents' shift in values.

The design professionals responsible for the developments at Elizabeth and Golden Grove drew on the social agenda of the twentieth century planning models of the garden city/garden suburb and neighbourhood unit to promote the potential of community building through the use of open space. The planting schemes associated with those open spaces were important in assisting facilitation of that agenda by ameliorating, defining and establishing a nascent sense of place. The open space planting schemes at Elizabeth and Golden Grove also illustrated clearly the links between different cultural attitudes and how they impacted on the use of particular plants in the urban environment. The predominant use of Australian natives at both developments was initially supported and promulgated by the sites' respective designers. Dwight's revegetation of Elizabeth with natives illustrated their suitability for use in Adelaide suburban developments. By the time Golden Grove was developed both environmental and ecological design criteria were being increasingly incorporated into urban design. Yet the addition of other development criteria such as achieving a profit saw the quality of the open space become a marketing tool. The planting schemes played a large role in achieving the quality of the open space and when linked to site marketability, as at Golden Grove, plant choices became related directly to the markets perceived oscillating cultural biases.

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